



MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

935 North Washington Avenue
Lansing, Michigan 48906
517.372.5374 Fax 517.482.4599
www.micounties.org

Timothy K. McGuire, Executive Director

Testimony on behalf of the Michigan Association of Counties:

MAC Transportation Committee Chair, Newaygo County Commissioner Mr. James Maike, Jr.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, today I have with me a County Commissioner from Newaygo County, Mr. James Maike, Jr. He is also the Chairman of the MAC Transportation Committee. Each year the Michigan Association of Counties holds a legislative conference in the spring and fall to determine our platform issues. We take recommendations from our membership, vote on amendments, and make a final recommendation to our Board of Directors. Our transportation platform addresses several issues at the federal, state, and local level. We've picked out a few important transportation-related issues we'd like to discuss with you today.

Economic Development

Roads and infrastructure are critical components for economic development and an increased quality of life. MAC supports the logical development and interconnection of road systems and opposes the development of a patchwork system of local roads through its counties.

- *We would like to see MDOT coordinate with agencies such as the Michigan Economic Development Corp. and Michigan Dept. of Agriculture and Rural Development to ensure that projects with the highest possible return on investment for the surrounding communities are properly funded.*

County Airports

The state of aeronautical infrastructure in Michigan is currently at a critical tipping point.

- *MAC urges the Bureau of Aeronautics to adequately fund the growing need of Michigan air service.*
- *MAC supports an increase in State funds to continue to match federal funding and to leverage as many federal dollars as possible in ALL categories.*

Road Projects

MAC understands the need for MDOT to postpone new construction projects in light of minimal revenue growth for the Michigan Transportation Fund.

- *We urge the department to reinstate projects in the order of priority they were when postponed. The department should also pay particular attention to those projects upon which capital investments have been made.*
- *MAC encourages MDOT and local road agencies to employ road building strategies and techniques, such as the use of asphalt rubber in pavement, in accordance with the plan "Highways for Life"*
- *Saginaw County example: Rubberized asphalt used in paving about 4 years ago, MDOT has since failed to do follow-up evaluation that it promised.*

Road Funding

With the growth of alternative energy and more fuel efficient vehicles, we are aware that the current funding formula for Michigan's roads is not sustainable into the future. However, Michigan's gas user fee has remained unchanged for over 10 years, and the diesel fuel fee has remained unchanged despite past increases to the gas user fee.

- *MAC supports increasing the gas user fee 9 cents, 3 cents per year for 3 years, with a sunset in 7 years and raising the diesel fuel tax rate to match the rate on motor fuels.*

We understand this is no permanent solution to the problems we face, however we cannot continue to fall further behind on maintenance; as the condition of our transportation network continues to worsen, cost of repair rises exponentially.

- *MAC would also support the ability for individual counties to collect a gas tax which is applied for that specific county.*

Railway Issues

- MAC supports the development of policy to work with short line rail lines to avoid abandonment of rail freight lines.
- MAC supports continuing to encourage rails-to-trails as transportation and quality of life issues and to encourage communities to cooperate in forming an integrated trail system. MAC encourages the State to fund preservation of rail corridors.
- MAC supports the federal, state, and local partnership pertaining to the high-speed rail corridor including routes from but not limited to Chicago to Detroit with connecting routes to Grand Rapids, Ann Arbor, Flint, and Lansing. A comprehensive plan should be implemented to be paid by the users of the service.

Closing Statement:

At the county level we stand prepared to work with the administration, legislature, and our local municipalities on government reform. We must first make a commitment to forward progress, and action must be taken to move everyone in that direction. For too long now we have been moving in reverse in regards to transportation and infrastructure investment, and we continue to fall behind. We **MUST** find a solution to this problem, and while it's not fair for us to lay this problem at your feet, we have little choice. If we continue our disinvestment in our infrastructure, Michigan will find barriers to recovery that will prove too costly to overcome.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you again for your time. We'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.